

MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS



Report to the Governor
2010

Introduction

Almost 97 percent of the people now in Missouri's prisons will one day be released. Overall, the Missouri Department of Corrections recidivism rate has been declining since 2005, however, of those released within two years 41% return to prison. This rate of recidivism is unacceptably high and expensive. For each new crime there is a new victim and new costs to Missouri's communities. The Missouri Reentry Process is reversing the trend of increasing recidivism and is making preparation for release and community supervision more effective despite the increasingly difficult economic times in which this collaborative initiative is operating.

As directed by Executive Order 09-16 signed by Governor Jay Nixon on March 23rd, 2009, the Missouri Department of Corrections continues to lead an interagency steering team for the Missouri Reentry Process.

The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team meets regularly to work toward integrating successful offender reentry principles and practices into state agencies and communities throughout Missouri resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce reincarceration, and improve public safety. The report to follow provides the history of the Missouri Reentry Process, a summary of the accomplishments realized through collaborative initiatives in 2010, a summary of challenges the team faced during 2010, a discussion of outcomes to date, and a brief summary of the work that the team will pursue in 2011.

History

Missouri was chosen as the first state to implement a model created by the National Institute of Corrections in 2002. This philosophical framework is designed to improve the offender transition process during incarceration in an effort to increase public safety, diminish new victimization, make efficient use of state and local resources, and to ensure offenders are prepared to be productive, law-abiding citizens.

Based upon analysis of Missouri's quantitative and qualitative baseline data, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team identified factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism and developed strategies to address these factors. These factors included substance abuse, medical and mental health, transportation, education, employment, housing, family, and information sharing. Data reflects that when these factors are addressed by a comprehensive case management plan with links to the community, offenders are more likely to be successful, thus, communities are safer.

The model indicates the Department of Corrections alone cannot effectively address all issues offenders face upon release into the community. Therefore, by forming strategic and tactical partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency and public safety, the mission of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team is making a difference in the number of successful offenders in our communities.

Accomplishments

- 1. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to demonstrate one of the most extraordinary collaborations in state government.** This team was created in 2002 and has continued to meet bi-monthly over the last nine years. As time has advanced and new initiatives have been pursued, additional agencies have been invited to the table. The dedication and commitment each of the members has displayed has played a large part in the success of the Missouri Reentry Process.

The steering team is comprised of the Department of Corrections, Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Economic Development, Department of Revenue, Department of Health and Senior Services, Department of Public Safety, Department of Transportation and the Office of State Courts Administrator. In addition, membership also includes community organizations representing crime victims, law enforcement, treatment providers, the faith-based community, children of incarcerated parents and any others deemed necessary to accomplish the mission set forth.

The team continues to recognize that without assistance many ex-offenders will fail at leading law-abiding lives when they return home. This can result in new crimes being committed with a huge cost to taxpayers and their communities. Through identified shared resources, the team continues to identify and implement strategies to keep offenders from returning to prison.

- 2. Transitional Housing Units have been implemented in 12 institutions across the state.** The following minimum and medium institutions have successfully implemented a Transitional Housing Unit – Algoa Correctional Center, Boonville Correctional Center, Chillicothe Correctional Center, Farmington Correctional Center, Fulton Reception and Diagnostic Center, Moberly Correctional Center, Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Northeast Correctional Center, Tipton Correctional Center, Western Missouri Correctional Center, Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, and Women’s Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. The focus of business in these units is to ensure offenders are prepared for return to their community. The offenders enter a Transitional Housing Unit approximately six months prior to release and receive various services including, but not limited to, the following: academic and vocational education; obtaining identification; cognitive restructuring; mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment with continuity of care into the community; education on faith-based support; employability and life skills; employment services; information regarding child support; education on strengthening family relationships and pro-social community participation; Impact of Crime on Victims class; and other areas identified as critical to offenders’ success.

The maximum level institutions are providing pre-release services to those offenders who are being released from these facilities. Due to the small number of releases

from the maximum level institutions, it is an inefficient use of resources to create a specific unit.

- 3. Missouri Reentry Process continues as a national model.** The Missouri Department of Corrections along with the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team provides consultation and mentoring in reentry and best practices to other states. Representatives from the team are often called on to present best reentry practices across the nation.
- 4. Missouri Reentry Process Community Steering Teams have expanded across the State of Missouri.** Forty-four Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Community Steering Teams have been established across the state. The community teams are comprised of representatives from community organizations, local and state agencies, faith-based organizations, Probation and Parole, local law enforcement, judiciary, local businesses, treatment providers, victims, ex-offenders and correctional staff. Each community steering team collaborates on the application of Missouri reentry principles in their community. The goal of community steering teams is to identify the needs of offenders (i.e. housing, employment, transportation, access to treatment etc.) within their community and partner to meet those needs, making their community stronger in the effort.
- 5. The Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health has expanded the pre-release Medicaid application process.** This process allows Department of Corrections staff to assist the most disabled offenders to apply for Medicaid 90 days prior to the offenders' release and offenders are notified within three days of their release from prison if they qualify for Medicaid benefits. In 2010, partners undertook the challenge of expanding the capacity to assist offenders in need of medical and/or mental health services after release from incarceration with a pre-release Medicaid application process. Since October 2007, nine institutions have assisted chronically disabled offenders in applying for Medicaid prior to release. With the change in the economy, however, it has become more difficult for individuals without a funding source to receive needed community medical, mental health and substance abuse services. To address this challenge, an interagency team was established that included the Department Mental Health, Department of Social Services and the Department of Corrections. This team was tasked with developing a plan to expand the current Medicaid project to additional target groups [pregnant women, individuals 65 years of age and older, individuals under 19 years of age, individuals who are blind] in all institutions. The team worked diligently for several months to develop the now approved Medicaid Expansion project. During the fall of 2010, institutional staff across the state received Medicaid training with full implementation scheduled for January 7, 2011. The Medicaid Expansion project will allow eligible offenders to have access to medical, mental health and substance abuse services without interruption of their treatment plan.

- 6. The Department of Corrections formed a partnership with the Missouri Veterans Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure incarcerated veterans are aware of veteran benefits and are able to receive assistance for a successful transition into the community.** There are approximately 2,250 veterans incarcerated in the Missouri Department of Corrections. The Incarcerated Veterans Reentry Coordinators provide a presentation to incarcerated veterans during the transitional phase of their incarceration to advise them of services and resources available and assist with completing applications for benefits and services.
- 7. Historically, offenders were released from prison without identification needed to obtain employment, rent an apartment or apply for benefits. Through the Department of Corrections' partnership with the Department of Revenue, staff are assisting offenders to obtain state identification cards in all prisons prior to release.** In 2010, the Department of Revenue issued more than 2,590 state identification cards to incarcerated offenders nearing release, an increase over the number issued in 2009.
- 8. The Department formed a partnership with the Department of Health and Senior Services to assist offenders with obtaining birth certificates prior to release.** Currently all institutions are assisting offenders with this process. In 2010, staff assisted more than 5,380 offenders in obtaining their Missouri Birth Certificates and more than 2,250 offenders in completing applications for out of state birth certificates. This represents an increase from 2009 for both in state and out of state birth certificates. Providing identification aids offenders in the obtaining employment, housing, and other needed services.
- 9. The State of Missouri was awarded two grants through the United States Department of Justice under the federal Second Chance Act to support reentry efforts.** The Missouri Department of Corrections was awarded \$457,935.00 in for the Second Chance in Action (SCIA) project. Partners on this project include, but are not limited to, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health. The project will serve high risk women releasing from incarceration to the rural Southeastern Missouri communities in Districts 12 and 23. Women returning to rural Missouri often face challenges in transition due to limited resources and limited ability to address unique barriers. The goal of SCIA is to increase public safety and reduce recidivism through an innovative transition model which draws upon research to intensify case management, improve employment outcomes and increase housing opportunities for the target population. SCIA is expected to serve 52 women through the one year grant cycle providing support for employment, substance abuse treatment, and housing; three of the greatest factors protecting against re-offense and recidivism.

In addition, the Missouri Department of Corrections (MDOC) has continued its strong partnership with the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) which was also awarded a Second Chance Act award in the amount of \$346,022 to implement

OnTrack, an innovative reentry court in Boone County which is designed to improve transition outcomes through the provision of integrated case management including housing, substance abuse treatment, and intense employment support. The Department of Mental Health and Boone County are among the partners working with MDOC and OSCA on this grant project.

- 10. The Department of Corrections has contracted with The Kansas City Crime Commission to provide post-release wrap around services to offenders returning to the Kansas City area.** In 2010, KCMCC was awarded a contract to provide post release wrap around services to offenders in the Kansas City/ Jackson County area. The services include goal plans that support the Transition Accountability Plan; one-on-one assistance from experienced case managers; access to classroom training to assist with personal goals; information and referral to meet basic needs and personal goals; and, staffing(s) with Parole Officer, participant, the Kansas City Police Department, Second Chance Staff and other relevant parties, as requested by Parole Officer.
- 11. Missouri prisons are focused on helping offenders obtain employment after release.** Kiosks were placed in all institutions which allow offenders to access information about jobs. Employment information is accessible through the Division of Workforce Development web based labor exchange service at www.missouricareersource.com. This enables an offender to search and plan for viable employment upon release.
- 12. The Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Planning Team completed recommendations for improving offender employment outcomes.** In 2010 the MRP Planning Team reviewed state and national research and data to identify ways to improve offender employment outcomes in Missouri. Directly correlated to recidivism, preparing and supporting offenders in gainful employment remains a priority consideration for enhancing offender success and improving public safety. The team concluded its efforts in December of 2010 and presented recommendations for improvement in both institutional and field practices to the MRP Leadership Team. In 2011, the MRP Leadership Team will review the Planning Team report and determine next steps.
- 13. The Department of Corrections continues to support the Innerchange Freedom Initiative at the Algoa Correctional Center and the Women's Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, which provides a faith-based reentry program to those offenders who choose to participate.** This program includes pre and post release case management. An important phase of this program is the connection to the faith based community prior to release which includes mentoring, case management and reentry services.
- 14. The Department of Corrections partners with the Department of Mental Health to provide continuity of care, from prison to the community, for seriously mentally ill offenders.** Prior to release, the Department of Corrections refers

seriously mentally ill offenders to the Missouri Coalition of Community Mental Health Centers. This is called the “MH-4 Project.” The Coalition links the offender to mental health services in the community in which he/she will reside. The project provides for 90 days of psychiatry services, 90 days of psychiatric medication, and up to a year of case management services. This ensures no interruption in treatment when the offender returns to the community. Since the initiation of this program, recidivism among the seriously mentally ill has dropped significantly. The two-year return rate for seriously mentally ill offenders released in FY08 was 25%, which is now lower than the rate of return for offenders without serious mental illness. A separate program, The Community Mental Health Treatment (CMHT) Project, accepts referrals from Probation and Parole officers. The CMHT Project temporarily subsidizes mental health treatment for offenders under supervision who have no other means of paying for services. Offenders on parole who complete this program return to prison at a rate of 14.8% within 1 year. In 2010 1,023 offenders were served in this program. The Department of Corrections will be doing further statistical analyses of this program in the coming year.

- 15. The Department of Corrections issued \$3 million dollars from the Intervention Fee Funds in 2010 to local community organizations that provide reentry services to offenders under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections.** The contracts for services included substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, housing, transportation, education, life skills, family counseling, and employment, to name a few, all of which are evidence based strategies to reduce crime and enhance public safety. Missouri’s use of Community Reentry Contracts was highlighted in the December, 2010 edition of the national publication *Corrections Today*. The article discusses how Missouri has been able to leverage its collaborative capacity and intervention fee revenue to sustain and enhance efforts to improve public safety through the successful transition of returning offenders. Corrections professionals throughout the country refer to this publication as a source for innovative correctional strategies and interventions.
- 16. The Department of Corrections, in partnership with the Family and Community Trust – Community Partnerships, University of Missouri – 4-H Life, Big Brothers Big Sisters – Amachi, ParentLink, Volunteers in Service to America and Story Link, have designed the Parenting from Prison Initiative.** The ultimate goal of this initiative is to end the cycle of intergenerational incarceration. The first year of this pilot has concluded, including both successes and challenges. One of the significant accomplishments realized this year is the development of an integrated system of Parenting from Prison resources aimed at improving the quality of the relationship between offenders and their children. This system encompasses many of the parenting resources available in the community and correctional institutions. The strong collaborative relationships among partners are an essential element of ensuring that this system is possible, and will assist in continuing to strengthen the network. Other accomplishments include the implementation of MovieLink, the exploration of enhancing Virtual Visits, and the investigation of the potential to utilize a web-based

module to manage the cases of offenders and their families to facilitate enhanced communication among partners.

- 17. The Department of Corrections continues to contract with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri to provide mentoring services to the children of incarcerated parents.** A total of 1,144 Amachi children were served from July 1st, 2009 through June 30, 2010. Since July 2010, Missouri Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies have continued to serve 1,093 Amachi children, recruited 1,781 new volunteers to serve children affected by incarceration, made 472 referrals for additional family assistance, and over 47 different match activities were held for Amachi matches statewide.
- 18. The Department of Mental Health received their third Access to Recovery grant which had an additional focus on offenders transitioning from prison to the community.** This grant provides funding to community and faith based organizations to provide a wide array of support services to individuals recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. These services include, but are not limited to, group and individual counseling, case management, day care, family counseling, transportation, housing, etc. Through a partnership with the Department of Mental Health, institutions are now referring offenders to these services prior to release. Access to Recovery provides supportive services to offenders while they transition back to their community and recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.
- 19. The Department of Corrections continues a partnership with the Social Security Administration which allows institutions to assist offenders with obtaining a replacement social security card prior to release.** Ensuring offenders have a social security card when released from prison directly impacts their ability to obtain employment.

Challenges

Although many accomplishments have been noted, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to face challenges and barriers in implementing reentry practices and principles on a statewide level.

1. The most acknowledged barrier is the **inability to share information electronically** with our partnering state agencies. It has been noted that many offenders who are under supervision of the Department of Corrections are also receiving or have received services from our partnering agencies. Unfortunately, duplicative efforts continue to occur in the assessment and planning stages when agencies cannot effectively share information. Advances in technological resources and incompatibility of computer databases have hindered information sharing between state agencies. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to work on individual strategies to address the information sharing challenge.

2. While the hallmark of acting in accord with the philosophy of evidence based practice in corrections and reentry is using research and data in an objective and balanced way to inform the manner in which we approach our work, make decisions, collaborate with our partners and develop our organizations, another major component of successful offender reentry is having the **resources available to provide necessary treatment to offenders while incarcerated, while on community supervision and after completion of their sentence**. An offender cannot successfully reenter society without treating the issues that relate to criminal behavior. These treatment options include substance abuse services, academic education, vocational education and mental health services. The consequences of the economic decline on the Department of Corrections and partnering agencies have the potential to impact offender reentry efforts. The MRP Steering Team will continue to communicate and problem solve to overcome these fiscal barriers. Adequate funding will always be an issue, however, the Department of Corrections has worked, and will continue to work, with partners to pursue alternative funding to sustain and restore these treatment options.
3. **The MRP Steering Team and Department of Corrections continue to work to change the community and organizational culture around reentry principles and practices.** We continue to educate and empower the community in their role in offender risk reduction and reentry and build understanding of how critical their services and supports are to the 97% of incarcerated offenders returning to the community. State and local collaborative efforts continue to be successful in building systems of community support to enhance offender success and ultimately public safety. Internally, Department of Corrections staff continues to learn and stay engaged with skills that are vital in preparing offenders for society to enhance public safety.

Outcome Measures To Date

An outcome study of offenders released after spending five months or more in a Transitional Housing Unit where intense pre-release services are provided has been completed by the Department of Corrections Research Unit. The study found that across the last five years offenders who received services in a Transitional Housing Unit for five months or more evidenced a decrease in recidivism after two years from release that has ranged from eight to ten percent lower than offenders who were not housed in a Transitional Housing Unit for five months or more. These offenders who are receiving the transitional services are not committing new crimes and not receiving violations while on parole at the rate of those who are not receiving these services.

The results continue to be encouraging. As the number of offenders who go through the reentry process increases and the time from release increases, the reentry process has the potential to significantly reduce the number of offenders being returned to prison. As

Missouri moves forward with the Missouri Reentry Process, all offenders will receive reentry services prior to release.

Goals For 2011

1. Further identify barriers to reentry and recommend system, policy and practice reforms to make reentry more successful for individuals going home from prison and/or under community supervision with the Missouri Department of Corrections.
2. Continue coordination within the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team to ensure federal, state and local resources are used most efficiently to reduce duplicative efforts and maximize the effectiveness of existing resources.
3. Further identify best practices and promote them at a state and local level.
4. Continue data reviews to ensure the reentry philosophy is positively impacting recidivism.
5. Continue to seek and incorporate the experience and perspectives of local Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Community Steering Teams into the work of the state level MRP Steering Team.
6. Continue to provide technical assistance to other states as they incorporate reentry into their Departments of Corrections.

Closing

The year 2010 was a productive one for the Missouri Reentry Process (MRP). We were successful in establishing new, and strengthening and expanding existing, partnerships to provide more services to promote offender success and enhance public safety. Outcome data supports the assertion that the Missouri Reentry Process is indeed making strides towards our mission.

Strong collaborative partnerships among MRP Steering Team member agencies comprised the foundation of success in securing two Second Chance Grants for Missouri. The purpose of the Second Chance Act funds is to reduce recidivism, increase public safety and help states and communities to better address the growing population of ex-offenders returning to communities. In the context of this purpose, these projects will assist us in furthering the mission of the MRP Steering Team to integrate reentry principles and practices in state agencies and communities resulting in partnerships to enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce re-incarceration, reduce cost associated with recidivism and improve public safety.

It was also a year of change for the MRP and MRP Steering Team. In September, Tina Waldron was named manager of the Missouri Reentry Process. Ms. Waldron comes to the Missouri Department of Corrections from the Kansas Department of Corrections where she served as a Program Consultant. Ms. Waldron took a lead role in the implementation of a statewide evidence-based risk reduction effort for Kansas Community Corrections Act agencies and was active in the efforts of the Kansas Reentry Policy Council. She has served as an adjunct professor in the Psychology Department at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, as a consultant for the Center for Effective Public Policy, as a research and statistical consultant for staff at Colmery O'Neil Veterans Administration Medical Center; and as a research analyst for the Kansas Department of Corrections. Ms. Waldron received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology from Washburn University. She has also completed doctoral-level coursework in Clinical Psychology with the University of South Dakota. In addition to the transition of the Reentry Manager, several long term members of the MRP Steering Team have retired or transitioned into new positions sending new representatives from their agencies, and additional partners are being added to the team to provide important new perspectives, such as the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

During 2011, we will welcome our new members and work together to examine our current efforts and determine how to best continue to build upon the strong foundation of collaboration and accomplishment that is represented by the history of the MRP Steering Team. We will continue to support local Missouri Reentry Process Steering teams as they strengthen community partnerships on a local level and look forward to providing support and technical assistance as needed. We will also continue to share our expertise with other states as they move forward in their reentry efforts.

The next report on progress of the Missouri Reentry Process will be submitted in January 2012. Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of the Department of Corrections, George Lombardi at (573) 751-2389.